



Homeless when released from prison

Duty Line: 0300 300 4370

If you were recently released from prison, find out about services that could provide practical support and help you find accommodation. You could also apply to Central Bedfordshire Council for housing assistance as a homeless person

Key advice

- Tell Central Bedfordshire Council of your accommodation and health history.

Help from Central Bedfordshire Council if you are single and homeless

If you apply to Central Bedfordshire Council for housing assistance because you are homeless, the Council might not necessarily be legally obliged to provide you with accommodation. The Council's duty to you might be limited to providing you with advice and assistance, not actual accommodation. For Central Bedfordshire Council to be legally obliged to provide you with accommodation, it will have to be satisfied that you are eligible, homeless, in priority need and that you have not made yourself intentionally homeless.

Central Bedfordshire Council will take into account if you have spent time in prison when deciding how to treat you, even if it has been some time since you were released. Central Bedfordshire Council will also look at whether you:

- have a mental illness
- have a learning disability or physical disability
- are under 21, or have been in care and are under 21
- were in the armed forces
- are fleeing violence or threats of violence.

Central Bedfordshire Council could decide not to provide you with permanent accommodation if it considers that you made yourself intentionally homeless.

Priority need for prisoners and ex-offenders

In some circumstances, Central Bedfordshire Council might decide you are in priority need because you have spent time in prison or on remand.

When considering your homelessness application, the council will look at:


- The fact that you have been in prison does not in itself mean that Central Bedfordshire Council has to treat you as being vulnerable and in priority need for accommodation. Central Bedfordshire Council will need to assess the evidence and be satisfied that you will find it difficult to seek out and maintain accommodation for yourself compared to other people who are homeless.

Prisoners and ex-offenders treated as intentionally homeless

If Central Bedfordshire Council decides you are intentionally homeless, it will only offer you limited help with finding housing. If you are in priority need, you may be offered temporary accommodation for a short period of time so as to assist you to find your own accommodation in the private sector.

Central Bedfordshire Council could also decide that you are intentionally homeless if you gave up your tenancy because your entitlement to housing benefit ended during a period in prison.

- having limited mental capacity

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- mental illness
 - frailty
 - an assessed substance abuse problem

What area can you be housed in if you are homeless?

When you apply to Central Bedfordshire Council as homeless, the Housing Options team will check to see if you have a local connection with its area.

You can establish a local connection, for example, by living, working, or having immediate family (usually a parent or brother or sister) in the area.

Time spent in prison in a specific area does not give you a local connection with the area where the prison is located. However, if you have no local connection with any area or if you are fleeing domestic violence, you can apply to any council in any area. The council you apply to has to help you.

There may be restrictions placed on where you can live. For example, if an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) says you can't go to a particular area, you may need to seek help from a different council.

Find out more from Gov.uk website about ASBOs.

High-risk prisoners managed by a multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) may be required to live in certain areas.

Emergency accommodation if you have no housing

You may need to use emergency accommodation such as a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast accommodation if you have nowhere to go following your release. Hostels provide temporary accommodation. Some are direct access, which means you don't need a referral from an agency to use them.

Search the Homeless England directory to find hostels, emergency and longer-term accommodation and day centres in your area. This information can be found at homeless.org.uk.

Use Shelter's directory or call Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444 to find services near you. The Shelter directory can be located at shelter.org.uk.

Help finding housing in the private rented sector

You could try to find housing in the private rented sector. Central Bedfordshire Council's Housing Options team will be able to advise you how to find out what housing is available locally and how to apply for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help you with your housing costs.


Apply for a council or housing association home

As a longer-term alternative option, you could also consider applying for a council home or a housing association home. Please complete the online housing application at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/apply/qualify.aspx>.

Help finding housing from probation services

Offenders serving sentences of 12 months or more are released on licence and live in the community supervised by the probation service until the end of their sentence.

If you are released on licence, your probation officer can help you find accommodation, as



long as you have spent a continuous period of at least twelve months in custody.

Help with money before you are released from prison

All prisoners are given a discharge grant paid for by the prison when they leave. This is money to help with your costs until your benefits are sorted out.

If a prison housing adviser has found you accommodation for your first night, you may be given a higher discharge grant (about an extra £50), which is paid directly to the accommodation provider.

You may also be able to get help from Central Bedfordshire Council's local welfare provision scheme. A prison adviser or other adviser may be able to help you with your application. Apply by contacting us on 0300 300 8070.

You could apply for help with paying for:

- essential belongings lost when you were away
- clothes
- a fridge for your new home
- help with the costs of moving into accommodation

You may be able to prepare for your release when you are in prison by saving some of your prison wages. You could consider opening a credit union account when you are in prison. Ask at the prison for details.

For more information on homelessness please access information on the Central Bedfordshire Council web site at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/prevention.aspx>

Contact us...

by telephone: 0300 300 8302 or Duty line 0300 300 4370

by email: customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ